

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application: **(AS ON AMENDED SHEET(S) ANNEXED TO IPER)**

Claims 1 to 22. (cancelled)

23. (new) An applicator assembly for use in applying a sheet of surgical material through an opening to bridge the remote internal termination of the opening, the assembly comprising;

a) a deployment sleeve for passing down a laparoscopic port;

b) a plunger for location within the sleeve, to extend from the proximal to the distal end thereof;

c) a sheet of surgical material which can be folded, or collapsed, for location at and within the distal end of the deployment sleeve; and

d) an actuating means operative to unfold or erect the sheet following expulsion from the distal end of the deployment sleeve through longitudinal movement of the plunger;

wherein the deployment sleeve is provided with an external flange to control the length of insertion of the deployment sleeve in the port.

24. (new) An applicator assembly in accordance with claim 23, including a pulling means operative to apply a pull force to the sheet following deployment.

25. (new) An applicator assembly in accordance with claim 24, wherein the pulling means is a suture.

26. (new) An applicator assembly in accordance with claim 23, wherein the sheet material, in use, is encased and protected within the deployment sleeve during the manipulation procedure to position the sleeve at the termination of the opening after which the sheet is expelled by the plunger to be erected to close behind and over the internal area of the opening.

27. (new) An applicator assembly in accordance with claim 23, wherein the sheet of surgical material comprises a known surgically compatible mesh such as polypropylene, preferably including a PTFE or similar non-stick material on one surface, being the innermost facing surface adjacent the applicator.

28. (new) An applicator assembly in accordance with claim 27, wherein the entire sheet is wholly of PTFE.

29. (new) An applicator assembly in accordance with claim 23, wherein the sheet material is normally a flat flexible sheet, preferably circular, and includes radial ribs forming more rigid but resilient arms through which, when the sheet is forced to a collapsed or folded configuration, the sheet is caused to open out to restore the flat

form.

30. (new) An applicator assembly in accordance with claim 29, wherein the opening is effected through the properties of the sheet material itself.

31. (new) An applicator assembly in accordance with claim 23, wherein opening is effected or assisted through a suture which pulls the sheet upward towards the applicator.

32. (new) An applicator assembly in accordance with claim 23, wherein the sheet includes ribs which have preformed fold creases to facilitate collapse to a predetermined configuration.

33. (new) An applicator assembly in accordance with claim 23, wherein the sheet includes ribs which have a "memory" acting to restore the sheet to a flat form.

34. (new) An applicator assembly in accordance with claim 23, wherein, in use, after deployment of the sheet the opening thereof is effected or assisted by a separate actuating means which may comprise a suture needle, with or without an attached suture, extending through the plunger from the proximal to the distal end of the sleeve and connecting with the sheet, the suture being arranged so that a pulling force applied thereto opens the sheet.

35. (new) An applicator assembly in accordance with claim 23, wherein the plunger is provided with a flange to control the position of the plunger in the sleeve.

36. (new) A sheet of surgical material including ribs or radially extending formations which may be resiliently flexed and which, on restoration, extend the sheet from a folded, pleated or crumpled form to a flat and self-supporting form.

37. (new) A sheet of surgical material including radial ribs each rib being hinged to allow outer parts of the sheet to be folded inwards into a conical shape, the sheet being extended to a flat form by an actuating means.

38. (new) A sheet of surgical material in accordance with claim 37, wherein the ribs are of a biodegradable material.

39. (new) A combination, for use in laparoscopic surgery, of the applicator assembly of claim 23 and said laparoscopic port, wherein the deployment sleeve of the applicator assembly is appropriately dimensioned to pass down the port.

40. (new) A combination in accordance with claim 39, wherein the laparoscopic port has a nominal diameter of 5 to 10 mm.

Stephen G. E. BARKER
U.S. National Phase of PCT/GB2004/000129

41. (new) A combination in accordance with either of claims 39, additionally comprising instruments for use in the laparoscopic surgery.

42. (new) Use of an applicator assembly in accordance with claim 23 and said laparoscopic port, for the manufacture of a combination, for use in laparoscopic surgery.